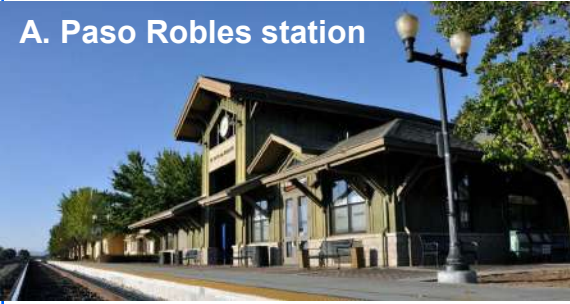


# Paso Robles to San Luis Obispo...

## A. Paso Robles station



- A. Paso Robles train station.** Actually, the station is called “El Paso del Robles” and is the city’s transportation hub for various bus services and Amtrak’s Coast Starlight and Thruway Bus services. The Southern Pacific RR first arrived in 1886. The current station was built in 1998. Just to the south is the restored depot building with various retail shops and wine tasting.
- B. Templeton** is located about halfway between Paso Robles and Atascadero (about 5 miles each way). It was originally to be named Crocker after a Southern Pacific Railroad VP, but was named after his son instead. It’s mostly an agriculture and ranching community, but also boasts the Twin Cities Hospital.
- C. Asuncion.** The community’s name is derived from the Spanish word for the Assumption of the Virgin Mary’s body into heaven.
- D. Atascadero.** Atascadero is a Spanish word loosely translated as bog, or in the Chumash language, “place of much water.” The railroad was already there (1880s) when the city was founded in 1913.
- E. Atascadero State Hospital.** ASH is an all-male, maximum-security facility, that houses mentally ill convicts who have been committed to psychiatric facilities by California’s courts. It’s located in the city of Atascadero and is the largest employer in town.

**F. Santa Margarita** was founded in 1889 near Cuesta Peak and San Luis Obispo along State Route 58. It was named by the Portola expedition on July 20, 1769 after the feast day of Margaret of Antioch. The asistencia on the Pacific Coast Railroad property was established about 1775. The SPRR arrived in 1889. Today, Santa Margarita is a small, quiet artist and family community.

**G. Tunnel 6** tops out at 1380 feet above sea level, making it the railroad summit of the Cuesta. It’s also the longest tunnel on the grade at 3,610 feet. It caught fire in 1987 and was closed until 1990.

**H. Tunnel 7**’s walls resemble the walls in Disney’s Matterhorn toboggan ride. This is because in 1987 its wooden beams caught fire and the coast route was closed for 6 weeks. It was reopened through the efforts of 2 crews working 12 hours each 7 days a week making the repairs.

- I. Tunnel 8.**
- J. Tunnel 9.**



**K. Tunnel 10.** The first Tunnel 10 collapsed in 1910 and the second was removed from service in the 1960s. It was eventually bypassed altogether by 1966.

**L. Serrano** was named after the Serrano family, who sold the railroad its right-of-way here. “Serrano” is a Spanish word for “mountaineer.”

## Cuesta Grade

### Paso Robles to San Luis Obispo

Paso Robles:

Milepost (MP) 214  
Elevation about 740’

San Luis Obispo:

Milepost (MP) 252  
Elevation about 240’

Radio frequency: 160.8750 (Channel 51)

### U. SLO train station



“La Cuesta” means The Grade. There are a few sidings and spurs along this route but no real interchanges or branches. The ruling grade is 2.2%. This entire section operates with Centralized Traffic Control (CTC). The rail route ranges in elevation from 240 feet at San Luis Obispo to a highpoint of 1380 feet in Tunnel 6 at the Cuesta Summit just south of Santa Margarita.

In addition to Union Pacific freight trains, this corridor is also used by Amtrak’s Coast Starlight train that runs from Seattle to Los Angeles.



\*Photos by Matt Batrynrodriguez

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## Cuesta Grade

### Paso Robles to San Luis Obispo



The San Francisco and San Jose Railroad incorporated on August 18, 1860 for the purpose of constructing a 50-mile railroad between those two cities. On December 2, 1865, the same folks founded the Southern Pacific Railroad (SPRR) and by Halloween of 1886 the rails had reached south to Paso Robles, and about a year later to Templeton. It would take another 8 years or so for the first standard gauge train into San Luis Obispo from the north on May 5, 1894.

The narrow gauge Pacific Coast Railway (PCRY) was already in San Luis Obispo by 1876. It came from the west (Avila Beach, Port Harford) and eventually continued south through Arroyo Grande to Los Alamos. At the time, the railroad was called the San Luis Obispo and Santa Maria Valley Railroad. The SPRR and PCRY interchanged in San Luis Obispo, which meant transferring passengers and goods from one set of cars to another as the two were not the same gauge. By 1942, the PCRY was out of business.

The Union Pacific and Southern Pacific railroads merged in 1996, making the Union Pacific Railroad the largest rail company in the United States. It’s the Union Pacific Railroad that today owns and operates the tracks between Paso Robles and San Luis Obispo, and indeed, much of the western U.S.

**M. Tunnel 11 (Chorro Tunnel).**  
**N. Chorro.** Is the area just north and a little west of the Cal Poly campus. The Horseshoe Curve is in the Chorro area.



**O. Horseshoe Curve**

**O. Horseshoe Curve.** Not long after exiting the last tunnel trains enter the Horseshoe Curve. From here three peaks become easily visible: Bishop Peak, Chumash Peak, and Cerro Romualdo. The Men's Colony lies just below.

**P. California Men's Colony (CMC)** is a male-only state prison located northwest of the city of San Luis Obispo. The West Facility opened in 1954 and the East in 1961. A Manson Family murderer is here serving two life sentences.

**Q. Goldtree Wye.** From the 1930s through the 1950s, this wye led to Camp San Luis, a WWII training base.

**R. SLO Water Treatment Plant**

**S. Stenner Creek Trestle** is probably the most well known feature on this segment of the railroad. It reaches 80 feet tall and is 931 feet long (longest on the Coast Line). It was built in 1904 and reinforced in the 1920s.

**T. California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly)** was established in 1901 and is a nationally-ranked public university that prides itself on its "learn by doing" approach.

**U. San Luis Obispo train station.** The present station was built in 1942 by the Southern Pacific Railroad in a Spanish Colonial Revival architectural style. The original 1889 station near the Ramona Hotel remains on the Dallidet Adobe property at 1185 Pacific, SLO.



**The Cuesta\***

**The Cuesta\***

**A. Paso Robles station**

**L. Serrano siding\***

**S. Stenner Creek Trestle**

**S. Stenner Creek Trestle**

**U. Pedestrian bridge just south of SLO station**

**U. Just north of SLO station**